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THE RESTORATION OF THE ORDER OF DEACONESSSES

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The revival of the ministry of women as deacons began less than a century ago. It formed part of a larger movement, which has given birth to the great philanthropic organizations of the modern age, and is gradually restoring to the church the ministry of women. To Roman Catholics it has given the Sister of Mercy; to Protestants it is restoring the deaconess.

Early in the past century the attention of certain German philanthropists was attracted by the work of individual women on behalf of sufferers, in England, Sweden, and elsewhere. Realizing the importance of training and organization to insure the permanence of such a ministry, they proposed the restoration of the ancient order of deaconesses. By various means they sought to arouse the Protestant church of Germany to its need of a body of ministering women. But they failed to secure the formal support or official sanction of the church authorities. The significance of the movement was not recognized, and the restoration of the order was left to private enterprise.

Humanly speaking, the Protestant church owes its deaconesses to the courage, wisdom, and faith of one man, Theodore Fliedner. While others planned and waited, he took action. In October, 1836, he opened at Kaiserswerth the first modern deaconess house to Gertrude Reichard, the first modern

deaconess. The pastor and the town were both little known; the house was small and bare; the work such as could be done by one woman with some experience in nursing. Ten years later the institution numbered over a hundred deaconesses, and supported nineteen branch stations. Similar houses sprang up in other lands, multiplying with great rapidity. At the present time there is hardly a country in Europe in which deaconesses are not at work. They are also numerous in North America, and may be found in parts of Asia, Africa, Australia, and the islands of the Pacific.

The order has spread most rapidly in Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia, where the houses have been patterned more or less closely after that of Kaiserswerth. The most important institutions have been united in the Kaiserswerth Conference, which numbered 84 mother-houses, 7,216 substations, and nearly 20,000 deaconesses at the time of the last General Conference, now nearly three years ago. Of these women over 9,000 were engaged in nursing, nearly 5,500 in parish work, and about 2,660 in various kinds of educational work. Every variety of charitable work is undertaken by these institutions, and they are sending out missionaries into all parts of the world. There are 54 great deaconess centers in Germany alone, 9 in Holland, 7 in

Russia, 4 in Switzerland, as many in the United States, 3 in Scandinavia, 2 in France, and 1 in Austria. There are about 1,400 of these deaconesses in Switzerland, and about 350 substations. In Scandinavia the number of deaconesses exceeds 1,160, the number of stations 440. Holland and Russia have more than 130 stations each, and over 900 deaconesses between them. Germany has over 16,000 deaconesses, and over 6,000 substations. As these figures are those of the conference of 1910, they doubtless fall far short of the actual number of institutions and workers at the present day.

The great Protestant churches of the continent of Europe sanction the work done by these deaconess houses, and furnish the pastors that preside over them. Yet none of these institutions is organically connected with any particular church government. All are independent of ecclesiastical control. Their deaconesses hold no official position in the church. They are consecrated to their service, but not ordained.

The Kaiserswerth deaconess may be described as of the institutional type. She is the lineal descendant of the deaconess of the Middle Ages. Her ideal is semimonastic. She is a Protestant Sister of Mercy. It is true that she takes no vows, and works under the direction of a presbyter; yet she belongs to a sisterhood, and the presbyter is head of a religious community.

This was not the idea of Fliedner and his fellow-philanthropists, but rather the result of their failure to secure a formal restoration of the order by ecclesiastical legislation. They were

forced to modify their original plan and to limit the ministry of their deaconesses to such work as was most urgently required and might be rendered by women in those days without question. Unfortunately many of the limitations of that earlier period continue in force. The Kaiserswerth deaconess is still commonly regarded as a sister, and is for the most part withheld from sharing in the larger freedom and opportunity enjoyed by women at the present time.

In addition to the League of Kaiserswerth there are various other non-ecclesiastical deaconess associations in Europe and America. The most important of these are: (1) the Evangelical Association of Germany and Switzerland, founded in 1886; (2) the Bethany Society, founded by the Methodists of Germany in 1874; (3) the Martha and Mary Society, taken over by the Methodists from the Wesleyans of Germany at the time of their union; (4) the Martha Deaconess Society, founded in Berlin by the Baptists in 1885. These associations have among them many large institutions and hundreds of deaconesses, all bearing a general resemblance to those of Kaiserswerth.

The deaconess movement spread from the Germanic to the Anglo-Saxon peoples at an early day. In England it attracted the notice of some of the leading scholars and ecclesiastics of the state church, and through their influence underwent an important change. Yet here as in Germany the ministry as a body held aloof from the movement; many years passed before the order was actually restored; and the decisive step was taken

by an individual acting on his own authority.

The movement began in England about the year 1848. Several prominent clergymen in the Church of England became interested, and after ten years it was brought to the notice of Convocation. Again after some years it was discussed in the Lower House of Canterbury, but no decisive action was taken. Meantime an individual clergyman had taken upon himself the responsibility of consecrating a deaconess. In 1861 Archbishop Tait, at that time bishop of London, set apart Elizabeth Katherine Ferard as deaconess of the Church of England. This act is now regarded as the decisive one, which restored the order in this church. But several decades passed before it received formal recognition from the body of the ministry. Meantime a missionary training school for women, founded in 1860, developed into the famous Mildmay Deaconess House, whose workers like those of Kaiserswerth have no official claim to their title, in that they hold no office in the church.

The growth of the order of regularly consecrated deaconesses was exceedingly slow. Small houses were opened in the course of time in several different dioceses; but the largest of these institutions would be accounted small in the League of Kaiserswerth, and all of the Anglican deaconesses put together were outnumbered by those of any one of the great houses of Kaiserswerth many decades ago. In view of this slow development the hesitancy of the body of bishops to sanction the movement is the less surprising.

Ten years succeeded the consecra-

tion of the first deaconess before any concerted action was taken. Then a set of "Principles and Rules" for the regulation of the order was drawn up and signed by eighteen of the bishops and both the archbishops. The matter was discussed in the Southern Convocation (1875, 1878), and in the Upper House (1883, 1890), also in the York Convocation (1884); but no action was taken until 1891—that is, for twenty years. Meantime the order had been restored by formal legislation in the Established Church of Scotland, and in the Protestant Episcopal and Methodist Episcopal churches of the United States. At last, however, in 1891 the House of Canterbury Convocation passed resolutions approving and regulating the revival of the order; and six years later the entire body of bishops assembled in the Lambeth Conference gave it their sanction.

Thus in the Church of England also the ministry of the deaconess was restored by individual presbyters on their own responsibility, and the first consecration preceded by thirty-six years the formal indorsement of the order by the supreme ecclesiastical body in full convocation. Yet because these individuals held the rank of bishops and were leaders in the body of bishops, their authority gave to the consecration rite a character which was lacking in the setting-apart of the Kaiserswerth deaconess. There is still much difference of opinion as to the *status* of the order in this church as elsewhere; but the Anglican deaconess has always been a servant of the church under the direction and control of its bishops.

In England also the leaders of the

movement sought to restore the female diaconate as an authorized branch of the Christian ministry; and, being for the most part men of great learning and high ecclesiastical rank, they were partially successful in reviving the primitive relation between the deaconess and the bishop. This has been the most important contribution of the Church of England to the deaconess cause. And yet it is overshadowed at the present time by her relation to the deaconess house. The Anglican deaconess like her sister of Kaiserswerth is usually a member of a religious community. The house in Rochester is the only one of any size which does not combine the service of a deaconess with that of a sister. This is a confusion of two distinct ministries, appropriate to women of opposite types. The attempt to combine them has been made many times in the history of the order, and has never succeeded excepting at the expense of its ecclesiastical functions. The Anglican deaconess was given a position among the subordinate ministers of the church to which the Kaiserswerth deaconess has never attained; but she is in danger of losing her birth-right without having gained that post of honor among workers of charity held by the Kaiserswerth deaconess for many decades.

The Established Church of Scotland was the first of all the churches to restore the order of deaconesses by act of legislation. The subject was brought before the Alliance of Presbyterian Churches held at Belfast in 1880, and a committee of investigation was appointed. Five years later a report was presented to the alliance, recommending

"the revival of the Order on a Scriptural basis, and as a recognized branch of Church organization." The Church of Scotland acted upon this decision in the following year, by formally establishing the order and preparing for the training of candidates. A training home was opened in Edinburgh shortly after, and a hospital was added before long.

These deaconesses are regularly ordained to their office by the kirk-session with the sanction of the presbytery. They serve for the most part in parishes, hospitals, and missions. Unlike their sisters of England and the Continent, they do not belong to religious communities, and approximate the clerical rather than the institutional type. And yet they also fall far short of the ideal set forth in the ancient church orders and by the church historians of our own day, of a ministry of women as deacons co-ordinate with that of men, and fulfilling the purpose for which the diaconate was founded in apostolic times.

The United Free Church of Scotland is still without deaconesses; but the movement to restore them began some years ago, and cannot be retarded long.

The Presbyterian church of Ireland has already introduced the order informally by permitting a training home to be opened in Belfast, and by employing its graduates as deaconesses.

The Wesleyans of England began to consecrate deaconesses a quarter of a century ago, and after four years of experiment their conference formally approved of the revival of the ministry. Several important institutions have been founded; and Wesleyan deaconesses are now at work in various parts of Great

Britain, and also in South Africa, New Zealand, and Ceylon. This deaconess has been described as "nurse, teacher, visitor, even preacher when necessary." She enjoys a freedom which is favorable to the growth of the order, and may be described in general as of the missionary type.

The Congregationalists of England have lately begun to employ deaconesses, and thereby tacitly acknowledge a need for their service.

Thus the movement is spreading slowly but steadily from church to church, in England as elsewhere; and the ministry of women is gradually becoming once more an indispensable adjunct to that of men in the evangelization of the world.

The Kaiserswerth Deaconess House was introduced with some modifications into almost all the great countries of Europe. It flourished greatly east of the Rhine, but it did not flourish in France. The house opened in Paris in 1841 did indeed become an important center for the order; yet it is one of the smallest of those founded in the lifetime of Fliedner, and cannot compare in size or influence with the great majority of the Kaiserswerth houses.

The Kaiserswerth deaconess is not of the type called for in France. Her ideal is not in harmony with French ideas of women, or French social customs. In France the unmarried woman has less liberty, the married more, than among the Germanic peoples. In France women are admitted to more of the professions and occupations of men than in any other country of Europe. The limitations of the Kaiserswerth scheme unfit it for use in a republican country,

where liberty of judgment is a birthright and the social laws are of a freer cast.

And yet the Protestant churches of France are awakening to their need of ministering women, and some of their leaders have called for a still more radical reform. Early in this century an appeal went forth for "a reform of the diaconate." A diaconal congress was held at Lille in 1902, at which reports were made as to the actual condition of that branch of the ministry among the Protestants of France. A deplorable ignorance and neglect of it was discovered, together with a general willingness to restore the primitive ideal of the diaconate and to admit to the order both sexes. Among the decisions of the congress were the following:

It is necessary to have deaconesses as well as deacons; for there are many forms of assistance for which women are better qualified than men. Each church ought to have its deaconess or deaconesses, helpers of the pastor, as Phoebe was the helper of St. Paul. . . . The restoration of the ministry of woman is one of the essential conditions of a revival in the Christian church. . . . In the actual state of things it is imperative to re-establish, under the immediate direction of the pastors, the ministry of the parish deaconess.

These utterances were not authoritative; but they expressed the decision reached by many of the leading Protestants of France after careful consideration, and they have encouraged local churches to include women among their deacons. The movement however, has been retarded here, as in Scotland and elsewhere, in the interest of various social reforms, which excite fewer prejudices and appeal to a larger number.

Another republican country responded to the Kaiserswerth movement at an early date only to find the ideal unsuited to its own peculiar needs and its independent institutions. Interest in the deaconess began to be aroused in the United States about the same time as in England; but events moved more rapidly on this side of the Atlantic, and twelve years before the consecration of the first deaconess in England the first institution was founded in Pennsylvania. Fliedner himself crossed the ocean by urgent invitation to inaugurate the movement. He placed several deaconesses, trained in Kaiserswerth, in charge of a hospital in Pittsburgh. Unhappily the leaders of the enterprise failed to distinguish between Fliedner's sound principles and the practical details of his scheme. They tried to force upon the women of America restrictions to which they were not accustomed; and to make the ideas of a simple German pastor as to what women might or might not do, a law in regions where the prevailing ideas of propriety were altogether different. Moreover, there was a strong prejudice at that time in this country against any custom savoring of monasticism, and the Kaiserswerth institutions were too much like the traditional religious community to escape distrust and dislike. The whole attempt failed in the end for lack of workers, yet not before some years of efficient service had proved the usefulness of the institution.

The Kaiserswerth diaconate secured no permanent foothold in this country until its advocates learned to adapt a monarchical institution to a republican environment. But in the decade which

saw the revival of the order among the Presbyterians and Wesleyans of Great Britain, and the Methodists of the United States, a great deaconess center was established by the Lutherans in Philadelphia. This house surpasses the largest Anglican institution in the number of its deaconesses and of its benevolent enterprises. Other houses have since been opened, and the Lutherans of America now possess a large and efficient body of deaconesses.

The Protestant Episcopal church of America was the first of all the churches to restore the order by episcopal authority. Six years before the consecration of the first deaconess in the Church of England several women were set apart in Baltimore by the bishop of Maryland. They lived in community, and were engaged in teaching and nursing. In 1864 a similar beginning was made by the bishop of Alabama, and the institution then established exists at the present day. In the following decade the bishop of Long Island consecrated several women, but without the laying-on of hands. Not long after a diocesan deaconess house was opened in Louisville, Ky. It was begun as a sisterhood, but in 1881 was reorganized as a "diaconal community" subject to the bishop. In 1882 a similar community was founded in Georgia. In New York City the first step taken was the consecration of one woman by the bishop of the diocese to serve in a parish church, in the year 1887. Thus the order was restored informally in this country as in England, by the act of individual bishops, and was in existence in a number of states for many years before it received recognition from the

General Convention. Evidently the bishops and presbyters of these various communions regarded it as in abeyance rather than as abrogated, and considered themselves at liberty to restore it on their own authority.

However, the matter was brought before the General Convention of this particular church as early as the year 1868, and from that time onward was repeatedly discussed. The "Principles and Rules" proposed by the bishops of England in 1871 were read in the convention of that year with marked effect. The bishop of Long Island made them the basis of a deaconess association in his diocese. Yet no official action was taken by the convention until the year 1889, when a canon was issued establishing the order on a permanent basis. Fifteen years later this was revised, and given its present form. It does not determine the status of the deaconess, or the character of her consecration; but it does authorize her service in the church as the holder of an office. She is made directly responsible to the bishop, and serves most often as pastor's assistant. She is therefore of the clerical type.

The legislation of 1889 was followed by the opening of training schools in New York and Philadelphia. Other houses have since been founded in Boston and in Pasadena, Cal. These institutions, unlike those of the Church of England, are training schools rather than homes. The atmosphere, indeed, is more like that of a home than of a professional school; yet much more time is given to study than is usual in deaconess houses, and the course is designed to meet the needs of gifted

women, including those that have been trained in college. More, the inmates are all students, and there are no deaconesses in residence save those that are in charge of the house.

In this church also the growth of the order has been slow. Before the action of the convention the deaconesses were almost all sisters. This identification proved injurious. It has invariably excited opposition and prejudice on this side of the Atlantic. Since the separation of the two ministries, and the bestowal of an office upon the deaconess, the development has been comparatively rapid. There are now in this communion several hundred deaconesses, working for the most part in parishes and mission fields as assistants to the clergy.

The Methodists of America were long in following the example of their brethren in Europe. The revival of the order was under consideration for many years before it was carried into effect. The movement began in this body as early as the year 1860; but more than a quarter of a century passed before the first institution was opened. The venture, as usual, was made by an individual, in this case by a woman with the help of her husband, encouraged indeed by a bishop, yet without official or even financial support. This house, opened in Chicago, soon became a center for deaconess work, and attracted the notice of the leaders of the church. The General Conference legislated in favor of the order, and an elaborate system was devised for its government. The growth has been extraordinarily rapid as compared with that in all the other churches of America or England.

It is evident that the Methodist deaconess, like her sister of Kaiserswerth, is better fitted to her environment than the deaconesses of other communions. She lives and works in a republic, and in a church which has always recognized the value of women's work. She is not fitted for life in a community, or for work under constant supervision. This fact seems to have been recognized. It is true that she is held accountable to a general deaconess board appointed by the Board of Bishops, and to a deaconess conference board appointed by the Annual Conference, as well as to the pastor or superintendent under whom she serves. Yet even so, she enjoys greater personal liberty than the deaconess of any other church save the Wesleyan. She is of the missionary rather than of the clerical or institutional type; and while she often serves in a parish or an institution, her chief work is that of an evangelist.

In addition to the house in Chicago, training schools have been opened in Cincinnati, Washington, New York, Boston, St. Louis, and elsewhere. The German Methodists in the United States have their own institutions, which are affiliated either with the American, or with those of the mother-country.

The Baptist, Congregational, Reformed, and Presbyterian bodies have all recently, each in turn, restored the order; not indeed by legislation, but by opening training schools and employing their graduates as deaconesses. The United Brethren have gone so far as to add to their Book of Discipline a chapter on the deaconess. These revivals differ little from those already considered. Their chief interest lies in the fact that

they prove a growing consciousness of the church's need of a body of trained and consecrated workers to minister as helpers to pastor and people. But the slowness of the growth implies also a general reluctance to allow women to share in a title which has come to represent functions denied to them for many generations, or ministrations in which their aid is quite superfluous.

The greatest obstacle to the deaconess movement lies in the ignorance and neglect of the historic diaconate as a vital and indispensable part of the organism of the church. Few are aware of the part which the deacon took in the work of the early church, of the share which the deaconess had in his ministry, and of the loss to the church and the world at large which resulted from the decline of their order. Many are drawn away from the church and its service by the urgent call for social reform, unaware of the fact that the revival of the diaconal ministry of the ancient church would enable them to do the same work as ministers of the church, to its purifying and upbuilding, to the glory of Him whose name it bears, and to the advancement of his reign upon earth.

One of the greatest needs of the church in this age is a body of men and women set apart to do the work that in ancient times was intrusted to deacons. There is no greater need than that of a revival of the primitive diaconate. It is not sufficient to restore the woman deacon. She cannot do the whole work of the order. The church needs also male deacons, men who are deacons in more than name.

There are many branches of the church in which the only real diaconal service is done by women. The restoration of the order of deaconesses should be accompanied by a thorough reform of the diaconate.

CHURCH UNION THAT UNITES

II

THE HOME MISSIONS COUNCIL

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Field Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society

In the April number of the BIBLICAL WORLD we published under the above caption, "Church Union That Unites," an account of the work of the Co-operative Council of City Missions in the city of Chicago, and gave a plan of federating churches now in operation in Oregon. The present article by Dr. Barnes is a succinct presentation of the work that is being done in a wider sphere by the great denominations. All of these facts are gratifying evidence that Protestantism is really facing the great task of co-operating for the spread of Christianity.

The minds of many people adjust more readily to close interdenominational co-operation abroad than at home. It is comparatively easy to take a detached point of view and look with judicial composure upon the tendency of our workers in Asia to sink denominational ambitions under the large aims of the whole kingdom of Christ. We are likely to cheer them for doing in united college and other work what we should not think of undertaking in the region where we live.

Correspondingly we are more eager to have the work of denominational competition stopped in a distant part of our own country than we are to stop it in our town. New Englanders who give largely for missions in the West can easily insist that there should not be too

many churches aided in any one place "out there," but how about having our denomination resign its place in our own village? On the other hand, in the West they say, "'The Interdenominational Commission of Maine' may be just the thing down East, but that sort of thing won't work out here." Furthermore, the home mission field is the zone of possible expansion in denominational territory and power, it is the tract of keenest sensitiveness.

Hence to secure actual co-operation in home missions is the greatest achievement of the kingdom of God. To grapple a problem of this magnitude, nearness, and delicacy, with any hope of success, took men of large mold, fine feeling, and firm grasp. Such men were given for the hour, when in 1908 Dr.